

FIG. 2 is a flow diagram of a routine that records individualized imprinting data using a template of variables. When a customer is identified as an existing customer, step 201 retrieves the customer's chosen template and it is sent to the client system for display. The displayed form includes a button permitting the customer to change the template selection as indicated in step 202. If the customer continues with the current template, step 203 indicates that the customer can select one of the variables stored in the template for editing and sends the appropriate form, step 204, to the client system. That form, might include buttons allowing the customer to select records for editing or to add records. Another button in step 205 tests to see if the customer is finished with the current variable. If not, the customer can select another variable in step 203, otherwise the editing session is complete.

Step 202 indicates that even though the customer has selected an existing template, it can be changed and such a re-selection would not affect any of the variables or the data associated with those variables since the logic of the design of the templates is very similar. They may use the same variable names and data types. If a new template used a different set of variables, the customer would be advised of that difference. Step 206 is used to offer the customer the opportunity to create his own template or to preview the entire template inventory. In step 207, a form is sent to the client system, which permits the customer to design his own template. One reason for this opportunity is that the customer may have special needs that the inventory of server system templates does not accommodate. The form that is displayed might include all possible variables, conditions, and attributes. The customer could rearrange these and incorporate their own fixed text to form a new template. The customer, when finished would proceed to step 204 where the first data entry is provided.

Based on step 206, the customer might elect to select one of the existing templates. Step 208 sends the client system a form with all the templates. One design of that form would be to permit the customer to simply click on a desired template to select it. Again, once chosen, the customer would be given the opportunity to enter data for a template variable in step 204.

Whether the customer creates a unique template or uses an existing template is not important. However, the template itself is a significant part of the individualization process since it contains text or images common to all individualized items and contains fields or variables for the entry of data, which will be printed uniquely on each printed item. It also contains conditions

and attributes which vary other printing features on each printed item. Thus the template is used to present an array of different data entry forms to the customer.

In step 204, the customer is presented with a data entry form based on requirements established by the template. If the template requires a multiplicity of data entry forms, a menu of forms would be provided instead. The form presented in step 204 consists of one or more fields wherein the customer enters suitable data. Buttons on that form are used to save the data, move among records of data, or to indicate that the data entry is complete in step 205. The technology to enter data on data entry forms, move among data records, and to save or retrieve data is familiar to those skilled in the art.

FIGS 3A and B illustrate two examples of templates containing a multiplicity of variables and fixed indicia. In practice, the templates are translated into forms that are web pages for transmission to the client system by the server system. In contrast with the previous example using coffee mugs, these templates are examples of wedding invitations. This shows that the invention allows for any number of implementations. It also demonstrates how templates can contain logical elements and attributes that affect the printed product in a manner hidden to the customer or selectable by the customer.

FIG. 3A is an example of the beginning of one style of wedding invitation wording. Lines 301, 303, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, and 310 show where the customer can enter data. Lines 302 and 304 illustrate text that the customer cannot change. Lines 305, 306, and 307 are arranged to show that text outside the data entry box is text that the customer cannot change but associated with that text and to be printed on the same line is data variables that can be entered by the customer. The web page designer would most likely layout the form in a similar manner since it is intuitive and closely represents how the printed product will appear.

FIG. 3A also shows that a template may be designed to contain conditional variables or attributes as illustrated by the right side of lines 301 and 303. Neither figure illustrates how the form could be designed as a web page since this is well known to those skilled in the art. It is clear that in FIG. 3A, only the bride's parents are giving the bride away. Compare this to FIG 3B where both sets of parents are hosting the event and are therefore included on the invitation wording. Thus FIG 3B is a simple example of one of many variations of data entry forms. In this

case, when both parents are giving the bride away, as might be an option on some other form, the contents of FIG 3B replace lines 301, 302, 303, 304, and 305 of FIG 3A.

In the invitation wording of FIG. 3A, lines 301, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, and 310 are all data variables that are common to the wedding event. These do not change on successively printed items. These are personalization datum that would be entered into the personalization database 110 of FIG 1. One implementation of a web page which might call for the entry of data suitable for this social event might be called "Wedding Data Entry Form" and that web page would solicit the Brides Name, Parents Name, Wedding Date and Time, and so on. Creative web page design might call for a calendar display so that the customer could simply click the calendar to select the wedding date. The software code would accept the click and translate the date function common in software code to the appropriate script automatically. This coding technique is well know to those skilled in the art and is simply part of good web page or software design.

In FIG. 3A, line 303, the Guest Name variable, will change on each successive printed invitation and clearly shows how this invention is used in the process of individualization. The Guest Name variable, line 303, is used as part of the wording on the wedding invitation, each being unique, is stored in the individualization database 111 of FIG 1A. An order for wedding invitations is usually supplied with matching envelopes. That being the case, a likely form for entering a guest name would also include address data. That data might be stored in a guest name/address portion of the individualization database. When it is desired to print invitations, wedding event data from one part of the individualization database is merged with guest name data from another part of the individualization database along with other fixed data from the underlying template. A similar activity would ensue when printing envelopes. This invention accounts for this multiplicity of uses of the individualization database.

The option of using separate forms or entering the data on the immediate form is part of the design of the template. The template then, directs the server system to pre-designed forms that can be sent to the client system. In an implementation of this invention when the product is wedding invitations and envelopes, a logical sequence of forms presented to the customer might be "Select Paper Design", followed by "Enter Event Data", followed by "Select a Wording", ending with "Enter Guest Names and Addresses." If this sequence is used, when the customer is selecting wordings, all of the event data previously entered can be merged into each wording